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admitted March 2d 1820

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An
Inaugural Dissertation
on Hepatitis
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A Dissertation, &c,

Hepatitis or Inflammation of the liver, from the vital importance of the organ assailed, from the violence of its attack and the frequent occurrence of it, in the United States, and more particularly in the Southern States, is very justly considered one of the most distressing diseases, to which the human system is liable. Having resided for several years, in a part of the country, whose climate is peculiarly favourable to the production of this complaint, it has frequently occurred, within the sphere of our own observation, and having been once or twice the subject of it ourselves, it excited a spirit of enquiry and has from our earliest pursuits in medicine gained much of our time and attention. Although with us this disease has been a subject of long and strict investigation, and assiduous attention, yet we are well aware of our inability to offer any thing original or interesting on it, it having heretofore been ably treated of by all practical writers; having however seen it in all its stages, and tested by observation, the

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correctness of their statements, we have chosen it, as a suitable subject, for our inaugural Dissertation —

Description of Hepatitis

In the following observations, we shall attempt to give a correct description of the causes, symptoms, and method of cure of the different forms of inflammation of the liver —

Hepatitis, has generally been divided into two kinds the one acute, the other chronic —

Symptoms of Acute Hepatitis —

This complaint, makes its attack more or less suddenly usually coming on with a sense of chillness, succeeded by high fever, and pain in the right side, sometimes pungent, and sometimes obtuse, which extends generally to the shoulder or clavicle of the side affected, but often to the opposite side, and is much increased when pressure is made upon the part, and to which the patient often applies, his hand seeking for relief. These symptoms are attended, with cough, difficulty

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of breathing and an inability of lying except on the side affected. At this time, there is considerable fever; the pulse is strong, hard, frequent, and intermitting, but sometimes it is somewhat feeble and oppressed. We have remarked that in the latter description of pulse, the intermission and hacking cough were more frequent and distressing than in the former and the cough seemed to be caused by the intermitting pulse. When the pulse intermits, there appears to be, a temporary congestion of blood in the lungs, which produces some irritation and consequently the cough. At the time we suffered with this complaint, we frequently placed our fingers on the radial artery, for the purpose of observing, whether the intermitting pulse and cough were concomitant — and we found that the former symptom invariably produced or was instantaneously succeeded by the latter together with some anxiety and oppression about the precordia — The skin is hot and dry; the tongue covered with a white or yellowish fur, and it is said, that "when the disease lies

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continued for several days, the skin and eyes become tinged of a deep yellow colour," though this disease frequently occurs without any such symptom.
In addition to these symptoms, "there is sometimes nausea and sickness and often a vomiting of bilious matter; the intestines are generally inactive and the stools shew a deficiency of biliary secretion or at least of any intermixture of it with them." (Thos. Practice)
There is a remarkable peculiarity in the appearance of the blood, just before it coagulates, the red part falling to the bottom, and the buffy coat, not being yet formed appears of a green colour —
Nosologists have generally made a distinction between the symptoms, that occur when the inflammation occupies the convex surface of the liver and those that are present, when the disease affects the concave. Cullen remarks, "It seems probable that the acute Hepatitis is always an affection of the external membrane of the liver and that the parenchymatic is of the chronic kind, the acute disease may be

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seated either on the convex or on the concave surface of the liver. In the former case a more pungent pain and hickup may be produced and the respiration is more considerably affected. In the latter there occurs less pain and a vomiting is produced commonly by some inflammation communicated to the stomach."

Wilson mentions these as distinctive symptoms as influenced by the particular surface affected, but Thomas, after enumerating these symptoms, said to exist by other writers observes, "My own observations during a practice of many years, in the West Indies, (where Hepatitis is a disease of very frequent occurrence) as well as in England, do not permit me to say that the symptoms, which have just been pointed out, are so unequivocal as has been represented by nosologists."

Causes of Acute Hepatitis

Hepatitis is more apt to occur in warm than in cold or temperate climates.

It is occasioned by all such causes as produce an

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inflammation of other parts of the system, as cold, external injuries, contusions, and blows. It is likewise produced by the severe summer heat, by violent exercise, by long continued Intermittent fever, by solid concretions in the liver by high living and by a free indulgence in the use of vinous and spirituous liquors. This latter cause is a very common source of the disease in the Southern States. Persons who live in the marsh Miasmatic districts of Virginia and who are even tolerably temperate in the use of spirituous liquors are very often assailed by this disease — —

Symptoms of chronic Hepatitis

The symptoms of chronic inflammation of the liver are frequently very obscure so much so, indeed, that the disease sometimes exists so violent as to formulcers on the liver, and is never known to be present until discovered by dissection after death.

This form of Hepatitis is attended with a bad complexion, a slight yellow tinge of the eyes, and skin,

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pain in the stomach, indigestion, costiveness, flatulency, loss of appetite, and clay coloured stools. There is a dull pain in the side affected, extending to the shoulder, a sense of weight and fullness of the liver with an enlargement and hardness of this viscus. The patient is melancholy and fond of retirement. In some cases of chronic Hepatitis the pulse is said to intermit.

The causes that produce chronic inflammation of the liver, are mostly such as produce the acute form of this complaint. The chronic frequently produces the acute and the acute as often terminates in chronic inflammation of this viscus.

Diagnostic Symptoms of Hepatitis

"We may readily distinguish Hepatitis from Pneumonia by the pain in the former extending into the shoulder; by the sallowness of the countenance, by the cough being unaccompanied with expectoration and by the less degree of Dyspnoa. The heat and pain not being increased upon taking any thing into the

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stomach, its being able to retain whatever liquids or medicine are received into it without the immediate rejection of them and the less prostration of strength will distinguish it from Gastritis. Hepatitis may be distinguished from spasm on the gall ducts, by there being no nausea, by the pain being permanent by the pulse being one hundred and upwards in a minute and by the patient preferring always to keep the body in a straight quiescent posture, whereas the greatest ease, when there is spasm on the gall ducts, is obtained by bending the body forwards on the knees." (Thos. Practice)

Hepatitis may terminate like other inflammations either by resolution, suppuration or gangrene but most frequently by resolution. Except in very warm climates it seldom terminates in suppuration and the occurrence of gangrene is very rare — Its disposition or tendency to the one or the other of the above terminations may be known by the same characteristic symptoms, that distinguish the peculiar disposition

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of inflammations generally.

Treatment of Acute Hepatitis

The mode of treatment in acute inflammation of the liver, does not materially differ from that which we pursue in other violent cases of Phlegmasia. As it is usually violent and rapid in its progress towards suppuration it demands energetic practice. Bloodletting must be largely and copiously employed. So long as the pulse remains full and strong and there is pungent pain in the side, we should not cease to bleed. At this time calomel purges aided in their operation by jalap should be resorted to. In addition to general we should not fail to have recourse to local bleeding, as cups, leeches and scarifications; which must be liberally applied to the region of the liver. After the operation of the above remedies, if febrile action be sufficiently reduced a large blister should be placed on the right side but a remark made by Dr. Chapman, should be at this time strictly attended to, "Never recur to blisters in diseases of the higher grades of action till

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in some degree reduced by venesection and other depleting measures. Too early employed in such cases, they hardly ever fail painfully to increase irritation and exacerbate morbid excitement. If one blister is not sufficient a succession of them must be employed, which is preferable to keeping open the first by irritating dressings.

In all cases of acute Hepatitis the antiphlogistic regimen should be strictly observed, but more especially in cases in which the symptoms are so severe as to endanger a termination in suppuration. The bowels should be kept perfectly open by the use of purgatives, as Calomel and Jalap, the Neutral Salts and Castor oil. Fomentations, applied to the part, pediluvium and sometimes the general warm bath are found to be excellent auxilliaries. Gentle Diaphoresis should be kept up, by the use of nauseating doses of Tartrite of Antimony to which may be added nitrate of Pot ash.

If after the reduction of the violent inflammatory symptoms the disease still proves refractory and is

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found not to give way and an uneasiness and dull pain be felt about the region of the liver, Mercury should be used so as to produce a mild and gentle salivation. I believe all practitioners concur in the propriety of this practice.

If in consequence of not being used in due time or from the violence of the inflammation, the remedies above mentioned have not produced the desired effect and suppuration has ensued, we should promote the formation of pus, and the discharge of the abscess externally. The first intention may be effected by giving Peruvian Bark, every hour or two in the course of the day, in the dose of a drachm or more, a nutritive diet, and a moderate portion of wine. To promote the second intention it will be proper to foment and apply a large emollient poultice over the part several times during the day. When the tumour points externally and has become somewhat soft we should carefully open it with a lancet. In warm climates where the disease is frequent and very violent this practice is very often resorted to and with success. Dr Bogue

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says, "in inflammation of the liver when it adheres to the peritoneum, which was generally the case, and a tumour appeared externally, it was several times opened with success." He then goes on to describe several cases in which the practice proved successful.

Treatment of Chronic Hepatitis

The common mode of treatment in chronic Hepatitis and one on which our chief reliance should be placed, is, the use of mercury so as to excite a gentle and continued salivation. "In conducting a patient through a salivation in this disease, it will be proper to introduce the mercury into the system gradually, unless the symptoms are urgent and in order to mitigate pain and subdue febrile action, which will occasionally arise we shall have to recur in some instances to venesection and to Blisters" — (Chapman's Therapeutics 16)

We believe in this form of the disease also, venesection is very essential which must be gradually, but perseveringly and firmly employed. Leeches applied

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to the region of the liver are beneficial, but a perpetual blister or a seton is thought to be the most important topical remedy.

Nitric Acid is another remedy, which has acquired a high reputation in the treatment of chronic Hepatitis. "Nitric Acid is diffusible in its operation pervading every part of the system and imparting more or less vigor to all the functions. It is hence an exceedingly useful remedy in a great variety of affections, besides the cases already mentioned. Of these the most striking are certain forms of Hepatitis and especially where there is too much debility to justify the use of Mercury or where it has been used inefficiently." (Chapman's Therapeutics & Mat. Med.)

Of late the Nitro-Muriatic Acid has been much spoken of in the treatment of Hepatitis. Even in the acute form of this complaint, Mr Scott thinks it would be highly beneficial. He supposes the acute to most generally to partake of the chronic affection of the liver either at its commencement or soon afterwards and in such cases, if not too violent, the Nitro Muriatic

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and if really insufficient of itself to cure the disease would greatly aid us in affording security and relief.

He is decidedly in favour of the use of this Acid in all chronic affections of the liver. Of the nature and treatment of chronic Hepatitis he makes the following correct and as we think valuable remarks.

"Chronic Hepatitis is a far more common disease than the acute, but it may be considered as always partaking of the nature of both. One portion of the same liver is often insensible, enlarged and inactive, while another part of it is suffering from all the symptoms of acute Hepatitis and going on to the formation of pus. It is this mixed disease that we meet with so generally in India as well as in this country; and it is this state of the liver which gives rise to so great a variety of anomalous symptoms.

For this chronic affection it appears to me that the Nitro Muriatic Acid applied to the skin is the most effectual and safest remedy. A few hours or even a single hour will sometimes bring relief; but it

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is necessary to continue the remedy, till the system be sufficiently affected by it and to repeat it occasionally till the patient has recovered his usual degree of strength. This is a rule in affections of the liver of the utmost importance. A state of weakness however produced is the great remote cause of those chronic affections: so that we may remove the disease, but till the strength and vigor of the circulation be restored we have no security against a return of it."

The expressed juice of the Dandelion has been given in the quantity of a gill or half pint a day with considerable success by some Physicians in this form of Hepatitis.

"To succeed in this disease, under any plan of treatment, the use of flannel next the skin, and an adherence to the antiphlogistic regimen is necessary. "As a laxative and an alterative the long continued use of pills composed of Rhubarb and castile soap is highly recommended." (Caldwells Cullen)

The above are the most important observations

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we have been able to collect on the nature and treat-
-ment of this complaint. I am aware that a great
variety of diseases are produced by, and connected
with this affection of the liver, but the extent of
my knowledge, the limits of this essay and the
nature of my avocations at this time, positively
forbid me, from describing them, which would
require much time and occupy many vo-
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